

Contributed

IS THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN AMERICA BEING ROMANIZED?

Certain considerations have called this question to the attention of many thoughtful Protestant people in our land during these last days. A minister of no mean standing and who has given this subject careful study has said to me on several occasions: "It is my deliberate opinion that the most serious assault that Rome will make upon the Protestantism of America will come through the Romanizing of the Episcopal church." This opinion has been repeated frequently to those whose opinion on this subject would carry weight with all who know them, and they have all, with larger or less emphasis, concurred in the above judgment.

I have recently heard of "a mission" held in a Protestant Episcopal church by certain "Fathers" of the Order of the Holy Cross, which seems to give good ground for the question at the head of this article. The members of this order "wear a distinctive habit at home and abroad" similar to that worn by the Roman priest, and they take the threefold vow of "poverty, chastity and obedience" the same as the Jesuits of the Roman church and they teach for doctrine some things that are not only unscriptural, but distinctly and peculiarly Roman.

Dr. Charles, in his tract, gives as one of "thirty-two Bible reasons why I am not a Roman Catholic" this: "In Matthew 23: 9 the Saviour said, 123412345 father upon the earth for one is your Father in heaven." * * Yet, from the Pope to the lowest of their clergy, they teach all of their people to call them "father." Why an Episcopal minister should follow this practice of Rome in taking to himself this Roman title is not apparent, unless it indicates his Roman predilections. I never knew an Episcopal minister to insist on being called "father" who was not at heart more of a Romanist than a Protestant, and "almost altogether more," except for the celibacy of the priesthood. In the list of my ministerial friends I find the names of a number of Episcopal clergymen and the only one who had an itching ear for this Roman title gave as his chief reason for not going into the Roman Communion, "This wife and these children."

Whatever may be the purpose of these "fathers of the Holy Cross," it is certain that with this Roman title and "the distinctive habit" of the Roman priest and the threefold vow which is also taken by Roman Jesuits and the Roman doctrines, which they teach so plausibly they are, to the extent of their influence and opportunities, Romanizing the Episcopal Church in America. The reasons they assign in defense of their threefold vow of poverty, chastity (or celibacy) and obedience (not to God, but to the man who is their official superior) are the same as those assigned by the Roman church.

They taught as a duty that people should confess their sins to the priest

and yet the confessional is the most notorious source of immorality in every priest-ridden country.

They taught that the priest has power to forgive sins, and yet this false claim furnishes the priest with that power over the consciences of men which has made ecclesiastical tyranny the shame of church history.

They called absolution a sacrament a la Rome and other like things they did and taught, which tended to Romanize the Episcopal church in which this "mission" was held, and so far as their teachings were not rejected.

It is generally known that for a number of years past vigorous efforts have been made, and with most regrettable results in some sections, to Romanize the Episcopal church of England. The relations between the Protestant and the Romanized parties in that church are at this time so strained that some of the prominent clergy are of the opinion that disestablishment would be followed by an open rupture when the Romanized party would go into the Roman Communion. With the facts of that effort in England before me and especially as they are given in that book of startling revelations called, "The Secret History of the Oxford Movement," and with the "Fathers of the Holy Cross" holding their missions in the Protestant Episcopal churches of this country I think it worth while to call attention to the question, Is the Episcopal Church of America Being Romanized?

A SOCIAL PROGRAM FOR THE CHURCH.

A prominent theological professor in our church has written recently on the question, "Has the Church the right to have a social program of any kind?" We would naturally expect a reply to this query based on the authority of the Scriptures. Strangely enough, the writer goes back forty-two years, to a "covenant," entered into in 1867 between the Synod of Kentucky and the "Southern" Presbyterian Church. From this union he argues that we, as a Church, are pledged under the sanctions of a solemn covenant, to the position that "the Church can have no social program"; and that "the doctrine that it may have such a program is unscriptural and pernicious."

It might be asked whether, inasmuch as the Synod of Kentucky is now an integral part of our Church, it has not shown itself to partake more or less of the tendency to a "social program," by having been drawn more closely than any other part of our body into closer relations with the Northern branch of our Presbyterian denomination. Surely, the majority of the Synod of Kentucky can not see in a Council, even with a "social program," any such danger as would prevent it from uniting in the actual work of education with the Northern Church.

Again, the question might be raised by some of us, whether the very existence of such bodies as "Northern" and "Southern" churches of the same faith and order, is justified at all, upon the basis of that closer unity of the Church which we conscientiously believe to be the mind of its King and Head. If the

Synod of Kentucky and the Southern Church were drawn together in 1867, may it not be that the same tendency acting today, may draw together larger bodies, for the purpose of greater Christian aggressiveness?

But leaving these considerations aside, let us venture to look into the Scriptures themselves, to ascertain whether the Church has "any right to a social program." We can not, however, accept the definition given of a social program as "a formally modified set of social or economic changes for the effecting of which the Church is pledged to devise suitable ways and means, and to the effecting of which she is pledged to devote her energies, as opportunity may afford."

A program is simply "an outline or sketch of the order of proceedings or subjects of any public performance; hence, a line of conduct or action proposed to be followed." It is something proposed—not pledged, until finally adopted. Whether the Church, as a whole, may not throw her weight and her influence into the social scale to promote righteousness, purity, peace and sobriety would seem to be, at least, an open question. Although the negative is proved not by an appeal to the Scriptures, but to Professor Peabody and Dr. Harnack, there may remain some reasons to warrant a great Council of Churches in asking the question: Is there any way by which we can instill into the mass of the social organism, the vital principles of Christianity?

It is true that our Lord "was not a reformer but a revealer," and that "his mission was religious." It is also true that our Lord said little or nothing about the Church, its form, its organization, its ceremonies, its creeds, above all, its "denominations." How much of the structure of the modern Church—in its widest extent—actually embodies the "mind of Christ," it would be difficult to prove. All that can be said is, that the same Holy Spirit who descended at Pentecost upon the disciples and began the revival of true religion, is still working in and through the Church, however rent and divided, and bringing souls into fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Let us look at the facts of our Lord's teaching. The central truth of his doctrine was the Kingdom of God. This was the announcement of the Baptist, it was the earliest message of Christ, it forms the center of the Sermon on the Mount. It is the center of the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." We may venture to define the Kingdom of God as the perfect reign of God upon earth, in a social system, based not on material necessity, but on brotherly love, through Jesus Christ. Paul teaches the great truth in I Cor. 12, that the body of Christ is one organism, knit together by a single vital force, and modified in various ways for the upbuilding of the whole. Our Lord teaches that the Kingdom of God is like unto leaven, which is to leaven the entire mass. His disciples are the salt of the earth, to preserve it not by isolation, but by communicating their conserving power to the mass. The function of the Church is the